



September 2021

Welcome to Earthly Matters, the blog dedicated to the partnership between CEMEX and the RSPB, where we'll share a couple of short stories including biodiversity achievements from across the business, employee stories and sustainable activities you can undertake - plus regular competitions (with prizes!)

We hope you enjoy the July edition of the blog - please do get in touch on gb-communicationsandpublicaffairs@cemex.com with any feedback or wildlife stories you would like to share.

In this month's edition:

1. Migration as a love story
2. Waste Not Want Not
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Migration as a love story



In autumn, many of you will see an influx of Swans and Geese. What is most noticeable to us is seeing them flying in that classic aerodynamic V formation; this V formation creates aerodynamic eddies that, if in the right position provide less drag and greater uplift to the bird behind - meaning the flight for the second birds take less effort, this up lift is the same for the third birds and the fourth etc., one on each side of the leader, thus creating the V formation flying strategy. The lead bird however gets none of those benefits, but

in wonderfully fair system, other experienced birds take it in turns when the lead bird gets too tired!

Possibly because of their size and powerful wings Swans have been known to fly at very high altitudes, spotted by pilots at 8,000 ft where temperatures reach below -40 degrees. Here they can pick up a polar jetstream that flows at huge speeds of up to 200 mph. The Whooper swan has been known to move from Iceland to the UK non-stop in just 11 hours!

Whooper & Bewick Swans, Pink feet & barnacle geese, all breed in the arctic circle and come to the UK and northern Europe. Swans are such beautifully majestic creatures, but many people don't realise there's more than one species. Whooper Swans are different from our resident Mute Swan, with a yellow patch on the upper bill and more streamlined head. In summer they breed in Iceland along with Pink feet geese. Bewick Swans also breed in the arctic circle, in northern Russia. However, all these swans and geese migrate south to escape the extreme winters of the arctic. Whoopers migrating up to 1400 miles. I always thought it rather amazing that a bird of its huge size (up to 11kg) and shape can actually fly!

If you listen to any swan flying you can hear a buzzing resonance noise of the wind resistance in the flapping wings and can tell that it takes enormous efforts for it to get off the ground, often needing a runway on the water to become air borne, and when they land, they 'do' a water ski effect, most inelegantly with their large feet splayed!

In the UK winter, quarries restored to wetlands have a good chance of whoopers dropping in, whilst they move around our wetlands and estuaries in the east and west, feeding on wetland and salt marsh vegetation and fallow & coastal farmland. Recently supplementary feeding at Wildfowl and Wetland Trust sites makes those the best place to see them in numbers on the ground. Different birds have different strategies for the successful breeding of the next generation. A Swan's strategy is to mate for life - a really strong pair bond that they see them through tough conditions. Swans are four years old before they're able to breed and we have records of them living up to 28 years although most commonly only just make double figures.

To step into the life of a creature, understand its struggles, is to love and respect its life. A tragic love story - once at the nature reserve where I worked, we collected an injured Whooper swan from the field behind my house. The weather had been very bad, and the flock had taken shelter in the fields. The swan had then been attacked by a dog one evening. Unfortunately, the bird was very weak, and the vet had to euthanise it. The following day the whooper flock moved off to other safer feeding grounds, all except a solitary bird, that's stayed calling and calling on repeat, I could hear it calling from my kitchen. It was clearly calling for the lost bird, putting itself at risk by not following the flock, in the hope that it would find its mate. It called for two days before finally giving up and moving on.

by Jenny Oldroyd, RSPB & CEMEX Business Conservation Advisor

[Image credit: Tim Melling]

Waste not, want not



It may surprise you to know that in 2020 CEMEX UK consumed 228 times more waste in our production processes than we produced. We are constantly looking for innovative ways to reduce the amount of waste we produce plus reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

Alternative fuels have been successfully used in cement kilns for decades. In 2020 CEMEX UK replaced 55% of the fuel used at the Rugby cement kiln with alternative waste fuels saving valuable resources and reducing our emissions.

Climafuel[®] is a waste derived fuel which is made using household residual and commercial waste and can, therefore, substantially reduce what we send to landfill. Climafuel[®] looks like shredded paper and consists of paper, cardboard, wood, carpet, textiles and plastics. The material has been subject to a treatment process to remove biodegradable matter and produce a solid, clean and non-hazardous fuel. All recoverable materials are removed for recycling, as a result, the use of ClimaFuel significantly reduces waste sent to landfill, whilst preserving fossil fuel resources. The fuel is manufactured to a tight specification by specialist waste management companies. At CEMEX's Rugby plant it replaces up to 60% of the fossil fuels currently used to heat the cement kiln. Due to the biomass content of ClimaFuel[®], emissions of greenhouse gases are significantly reduced which improves the embodied carbon of our cement and concrete products. The cement industry has a significant role to play in helping to overcome the UK's waste crisis, which we all individually help to create.

Hot off the press, CEMEX has recently announced that \$25 million will be invested in our Rugby cement plant to completely phase out the use of fossil fuels. The new system which incorporates the use of green hydrogen in the production process will allow the kiln to operate on 100% alternative fuels increasing our waste consumption even further and helping us reach our climate action targets.

Not forgetting our other business areas, we are striving to reduce our waste production across all CEMEX sites. Between 2014 and 2020 we reduced the amount of general waste going to landfill from all our daily operations by an incredible 68%. We now divert up to 95% of the waste produced through collaboration and dedication to the recycling cause, so a massive thank you to everyone who has helped us achieve these fantastic results.

by Miranda Clegg, Manager Sustainability UK

Be Beach Friendly every time



While the summer may be over, Britain's beautiful beaches are open all year round and the perfect destination for a day trip, or a visit during the October half term.

However, if you go down to the beach today you may be in for an unpleasant surprise because of litter and pollution.

Plastic pollution isn't just an issue on the other side of the world – it's impacting our wildlife and environment here in the UK too, thanks to the huge amounts of litter left on our beaches and washed up by tides.

Last year, the Marine Conservation Society found 425 litter items per 100m of beach surveyed during its Great British Beach Clean, while 30% of the beaches cleared found face masks and PPE discarded. This is an issue that affects us all – not only does it harm hundreds of species of marine wildlife, but it also prevents us from enjoying the UK's beautiful beaches too! Who wants to settle down to dig a castle with their family and end up with someone else's face mask or picnic leftovers in their lap?!

Catch the last of the clement weather and get a wellbeing lift from that magical autumn sunlight – and a feeling you've done something positive for the world by joining a beach clean. Dates can be found here: <https://www.mcsuk.org/what-you-can-do/join-a-beach-clean/find-a-beach-clean/>

What else can we do to support our beaches?

It's super easy to help out and is a good way to encourage your children and family to think about the environment more.

Firstly, make sure to leave the beach as you find it – take away anything and everything you have brought with you. If the bins are full, please take your litter home. Don't leave it by the side of the bin where it can be blown back on to the beach.

To go one step further, why not take an empty carrier bag with you and fill it with rubbish already on the beach, and then dispose of it at home? This is such a simple way to help the environment and probably won't take more than a few minutes. Plus, if helping wildlife isn't incentive enough local businesses by the beach may offer rewards to litter-pickers. For instance, eco-beauty store Haeckels in [Margate](#) runs a RUBBISH FOR PRODUCT scheme – bring a bag of litter into the shop with visual proof that it came from the beach and get a free product! It's well worth doing some research before you head to the beach to see if your destination offers anything similar.

To find out more about the Marine Conservation Society and their Beach Clean work, click [here](#).

Send us your stories!

We are looking for staff stories to include in upcoming blogs, these can be experiences from work or home.

Send us your wildlife stories, questions and encounters and receive a free RSPB gift when it is featured; choose from a bird box, bird feeder or RSPB garden bird guide book, or RSPB book on enhancing your garden for wildlife.

Contact gb-communicationsandpublicaffairs@cemex.com